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ABSTRACT

The study involving 16 male Mexican American students and 16 Anglo students (10-12 years old) who had been categorized as educable mentally handicapped (EMH) was conducted to examine the relationship between special education labels and race, and student and teacher perception on scores of the Modified Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The teacher was first asked to rate a student on his/her perception of the student, and students were then asked to rate themselves. Findings were summarized into the following points: (1) teachers' perceptions of normal students are very similar regardless of race; (2) EMH students are perceived differently than normal students by teachers and teachers also differ in their perceptions of Chicano EMH and Anglo EMH students; (3) normal Chicano students and normal Anglo students share common perceptions of themselves; and (4) Anglo EMH students perceive themselves to be very much like the normal students. The Chicano EMH students however, perceive themselves very differently than do normal Anglo, normal Chicano, and EMH Anglo students. (Graphs showing statistical data are included.) (SBH)

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Perceived Roles and Educable Mentally Handicapped Minority Students

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Perceived Roles and Educable Mentally Handicapped Minority Students

One of the most fervently debated issues in special education has been the long standing practice of labeling children. Classifying children according to disability categories has been perpetuated by legal and administrative rationales (Deno, 1970). Within special education, labels can and do impute negative stigma (Dunn, 1968; Johnson, 1969; Elliot, 1971; Reynolds & Balow, 1972). The proposition that a person's expectation for another may come to serve as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" is firmly entrenched in the field of special education (Beez, 1968; Rosenthal & Jackson, 1968; Good & Brophy, 1971).

Since teachers are primarily responsible for the education of all children, many studies have specifically concentrated upon the attitudes of regular and special education teachers toward exceptional children (Mazer, 1971; Panda & Bartel, 1972; Good & Dembo, 1973; Salvia, Clark & Ysseldyke, 1973; Jones, 1974). The results of many of these studies have shown that children clinically labeled were viewed less positively than normal children or exceptional children who were not labeled. In addition, the results of another study (McCoy & Prieto, 1978) suggested that teacher perceptions may not match students' perceptions, for either normal or special populations.

Teacher expectancies generated from classified systems are also found in ethnic or racial labels (Leacock, 1969; Jackson & Cosca, 1974; Kelly, Bullock & Dykes, 1977; Zucker & Prieto, 1977). Additional studies indicate that teachers tend to view students of their own cognitive style more favorably and to give better grades to these students than to students whose style differed from their own (Davilia-de la Luz,

Diaz-Guerrero & Tapia, 1966; DiStafano, 1970). For example, Jackson and Cosca (1974) found that teachers praised or encouraged whites 35% more, accepted or used the ideas of whites 40% more, and directed 21% more questions to whites than they did to Mexican-Americans. Most teachers and Anglo students are significantly more field-independent than Mexican-American students (Mebane & Johnson, 1970; Ramirez, 1973; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1974).

Besides the previously cited literature which indicates that students' and teachers' perceptions are related to ethnicity and classification, there is also evidence to indicate a possible relationship between expectation and sexual role performance.

It is also reported that the school environment serves to acculturate the student. One aspect of this acculturation is to transmit traditional notions of sex roles to children (Harris, 1975; Lee, 1975). There is further evidence that persons who manifest certain characteristics that are stereotyped as being masculine are often perceived in more positive light than people who manifest characteristics that are associated with femininity (Bem, 1975).

Generally it has been conceptualized that masculinity and femininity are bipolar ends of a single dimension. More recently, however, psychologists have been investigating the concept of psychological androgyny. Psychological androgyny is a term that refers to the integration of both masculine and feminine traits within an individual (Bem, 1974; Bozin & Freeman, 1974; Pleck, 1975). Androgyny implies that it is possible for a person to be both "assertive and compassionate, both instrumental and expressive, both masculine and feminine, depending upon the situational appropriateness" (Bem, 1974). A person who is androgynous may

blend the complementary male and female traits in a single act, e.g., "to fire an employee, traditionally a male trait but with sensitivity for the human emotion that firing a person generally produces, traditionally a female trait" (Bem, 1974).

Persons who view themselves as androgynous have been found to show greater maturity in moral judgments (Block, 1973). Androgynous subjects have also been rated as having a higher level of self-esteem (Spence, et al., 1975) than subjects who have rated themselves as primarily masculine or feminine.

An instrument commonly used to define subjects as masculine, feminine, or androgynous on the basis of self-ratings is the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The BSRI results in four scores: masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Androgynous refers to a score which is high masculine and high feminine; undifferentiated is low masculine and low feminine score.

Briefly, the BSRI contains both a masculine scale and a feminine scale. Each scale has 20 items related to masculine and feminine personality characteristics. These characteristics have all been judged to be significantly more desirable for one sex than for the other. All of the characteristics are positive in tone (e.g., independent, forceful, affectionate, compassionate, etc.). When taking a BSRI, the subject is asked to rate himself or herself on a seven point scale on each of the 20 masculine and 20 feminine personality characteristics.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between special education labels and race, and student and teacher perception

on scores of the Modified Bem Sex Role Inventory.

Since the literature suggests that subjects who classify themselves as androgynous hold themselves in high esteem, it may well be worthwhile to see if children having negative educational and racial labels perceive themselves differently than children who do not carry these labels. Further, since teachers may be influential in shaping children's self-concept, it may be important to find out whether a teacher's perception of a student matches the student's perception of himself.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects used in this preliminary study were 16 male Mexican-American students and 16 Anglo students who had been categorized as Educably Mentally Handicapped, as well as 16 Mexican-American and 16 Anglo regular educational students. The students were 10, 11, or 12 years old. The students were enrolled in several metropolitan school districts.

Procedure

The procedure used in this preliminary study was to administer the Bem Sex Role Inventory to the teacher before administering it to the student. The teacher was asked to rate a student on his/her perception of the student. Students were then asked to rate themselves. In all of the sessions, the student was administered the Bem by a trained experimentor. Neither the teachers nor the students were allowed to view each other's responses during the course of data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Bem (1975), subjects who perceive themselves as androgynous have a high self-esteem. Undifferentiated subjects, however, have a low self-esteem. Masculine and feminine classifications result in scores of self-esteem somewhere between the adrogynous and undifferentiated. We may also assume that teachers who rate students as androgynous hold those same students in high esteem as opposed to students whom they rate as either masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated. However, since sex roles are learned behavior, it is possible that a classification of undifferentiated merely indicates that the "self" and therefore self-esteem has not yet been established. A sensitivity and self-perception develops with age and experience.

As can be seen from Figure 1, the teachers of normal Anglo children report 25% of them to be androgynous, 31% to be masculine, 25% to be feminine and 19% to be undifferentiated.

Insert Figure 1

Comparing that to the student responses, Figure 2, it can be seen that teachers do not view the students the same way that students view themselves.

Insert Figure 2

In Figure 3, the teachers of normal Chicano students report similar perceptions of these children to normal Anglo students. Thus, there appears to be no great difference in how teachers perceive the normal population regardless of race.

Insert Figure 3

Figure 4 indicates that although student and teacher perceptions are different, the Anglo normal and Chicano normal student responses are very similar and follow the same pattern.

Insert Figure 4

Teachers' perceptions of EMH Anglo students differ from the students' perceptions of self as seen in Figures 5 and 6.

Insert Figure 5

Insert Figure 6

As we compare those responses to the responses of teachers of EMH Chicano students, as represented in Figure 7, it can be seen that teachers view EMH Anglo students differently than they do EMH Chicano students. The teachers report a higher percentage of EMH Chicanos as undifferentiated.

Insert Figure 7

Figure 8 indicates that EMH Chicano students perceive themselves differently than do their teachers. They also view themselves differently than both the EMH Anglo and normal samples.

Insert Figure 8

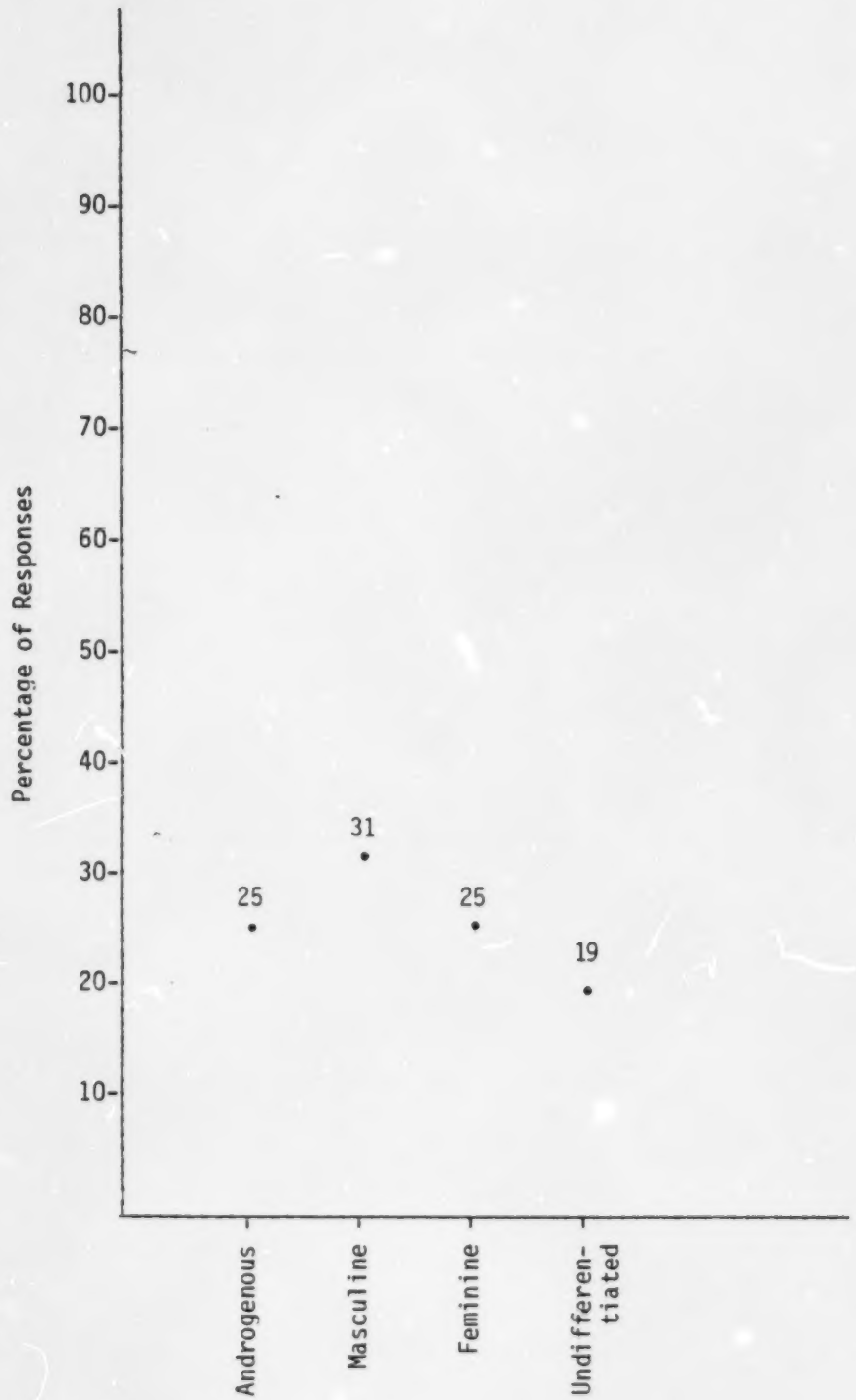
One of the most interesting comparisons is between the Chicano EMH students and all other students sampled (Figures 2, 4, 6, and 8). It can be seen that Anglo EMH students perceive themselves very much like the Anglo normal and Chicano normal students, and their response patterns are extremely similar. The responses of the Chicano EMH students however, do not resemble the other student responses, indicating that they do not perceive themselves to be similar to the other students. That may have some implications for teaching if we view the undifferentiated students

as being in a state of sex role transition, meaning that they have not yet established their sex role identity.

Although these data are only descriptive and cannot be considered to be demonstrative, there appear to be some trends that warrant further investigation. In summary the following points can be made:

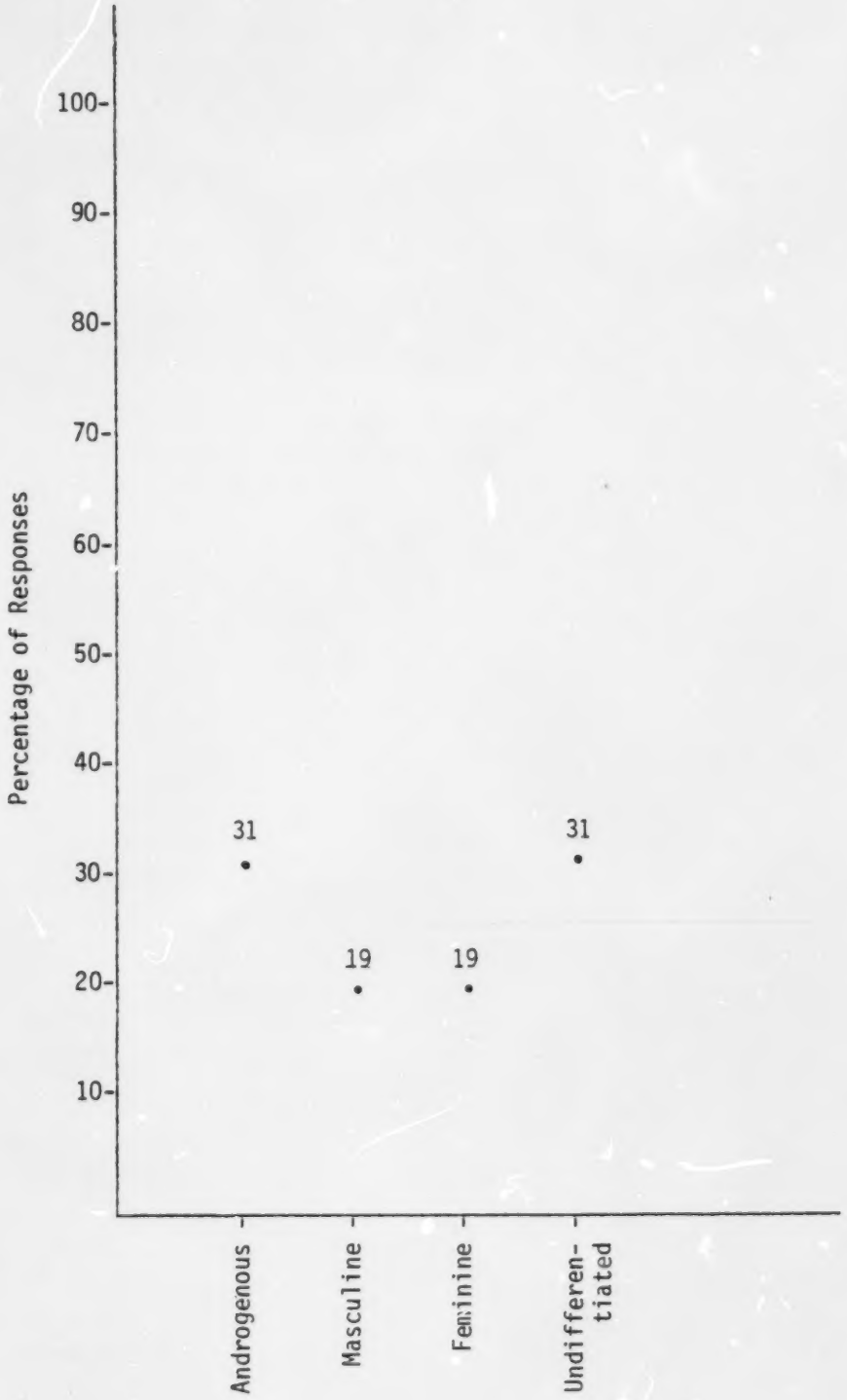
1. Teachers' perceptions of normal students are very similar regardless of race.
2. EMH students are perceived differently than normal students by teachers. Teachers also differ in their perceptions of Chicano EMH and Anglo EMH students.
3. Normal Chicano students and normal Anglo students share common perceptions of themselves.
4. Anglo EMH students perceive themselves to be very much like the normal students. The Chicano EMH students however, perceive themselves very differently than do normal Anglo, normal Chicano, and EMH Anglo students.

As was stated earlier, if the undifferentiated students are in fact in transition, then the Chicano EMH students may run a higher risk of ultimately developing less positive sex roles. They may also develop sex roles which are associated with lower self esteem. One implication of this may be that if sex roles are learned and if teaching is significant in establishing positive sex roles and positive self esteem, then the Anglo and Chicano normal students, as well as the Anglo EMH students are apparently learning sex role differentiation in a positive direction. On the other hand, the Chicano EMH students do not appear to have positive sex role perceptions of themselves.



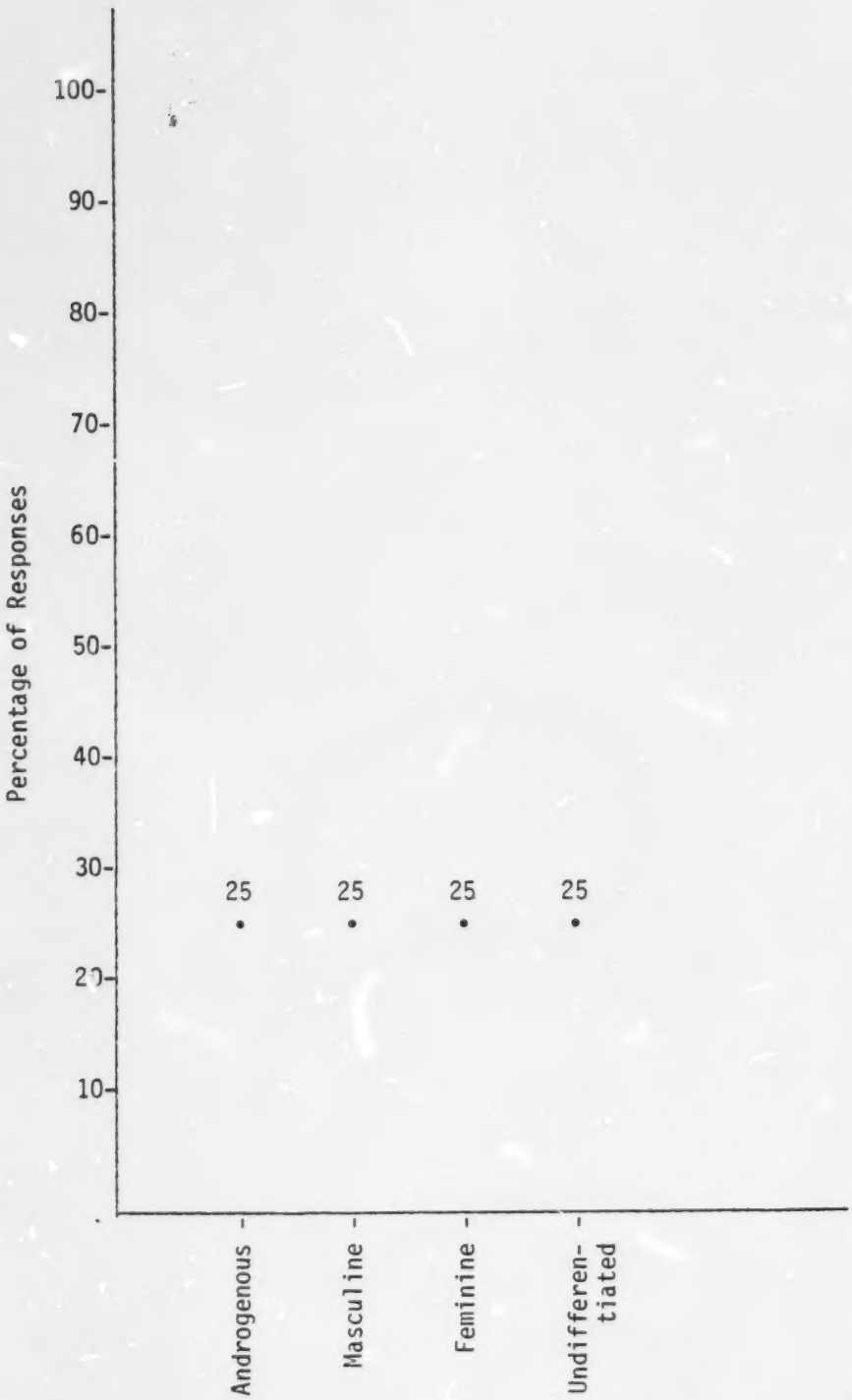
Responses of Teachers of Normal Anglo Students

Figure 1



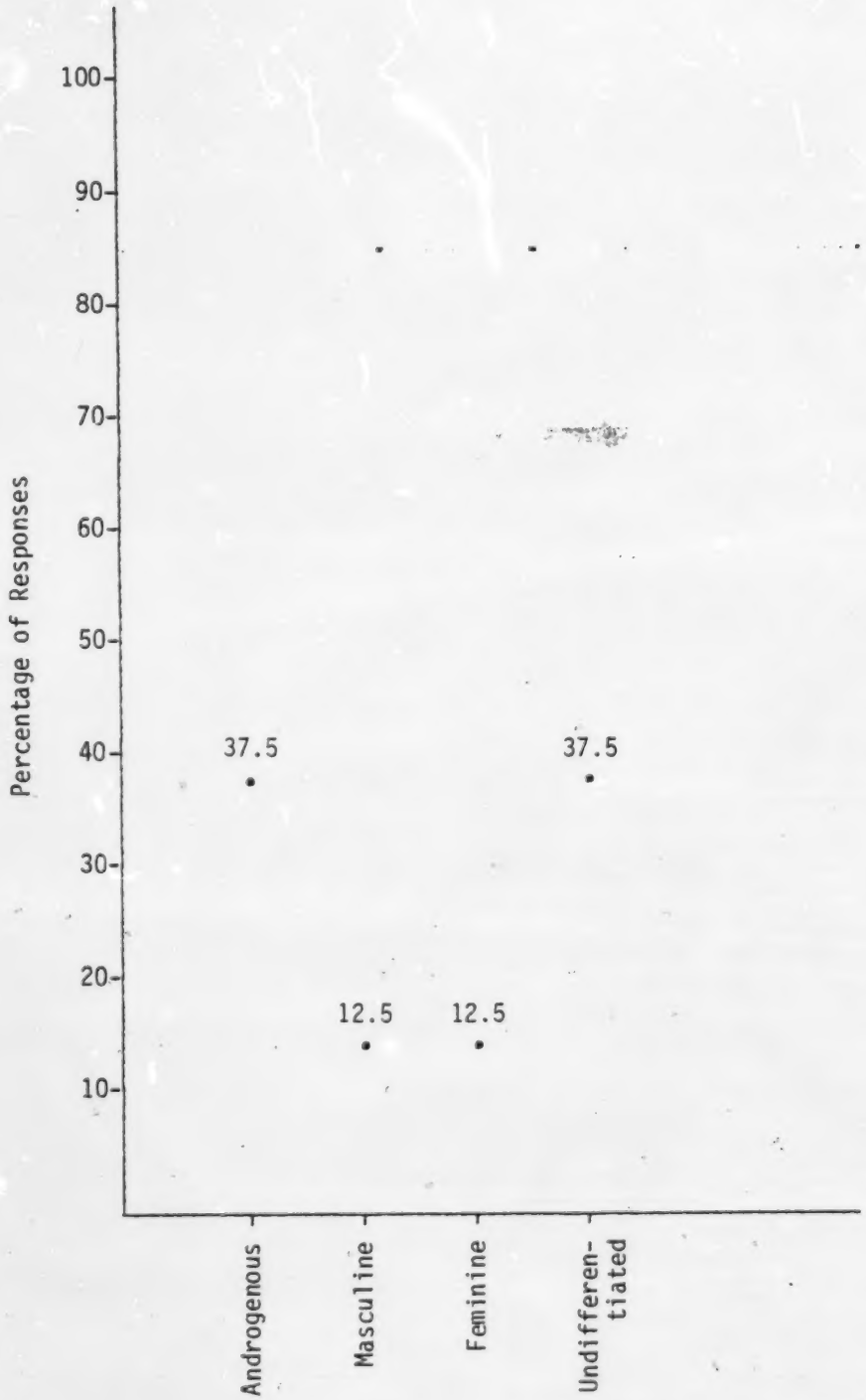
Responses of Normal Anglo Students

Figure 2



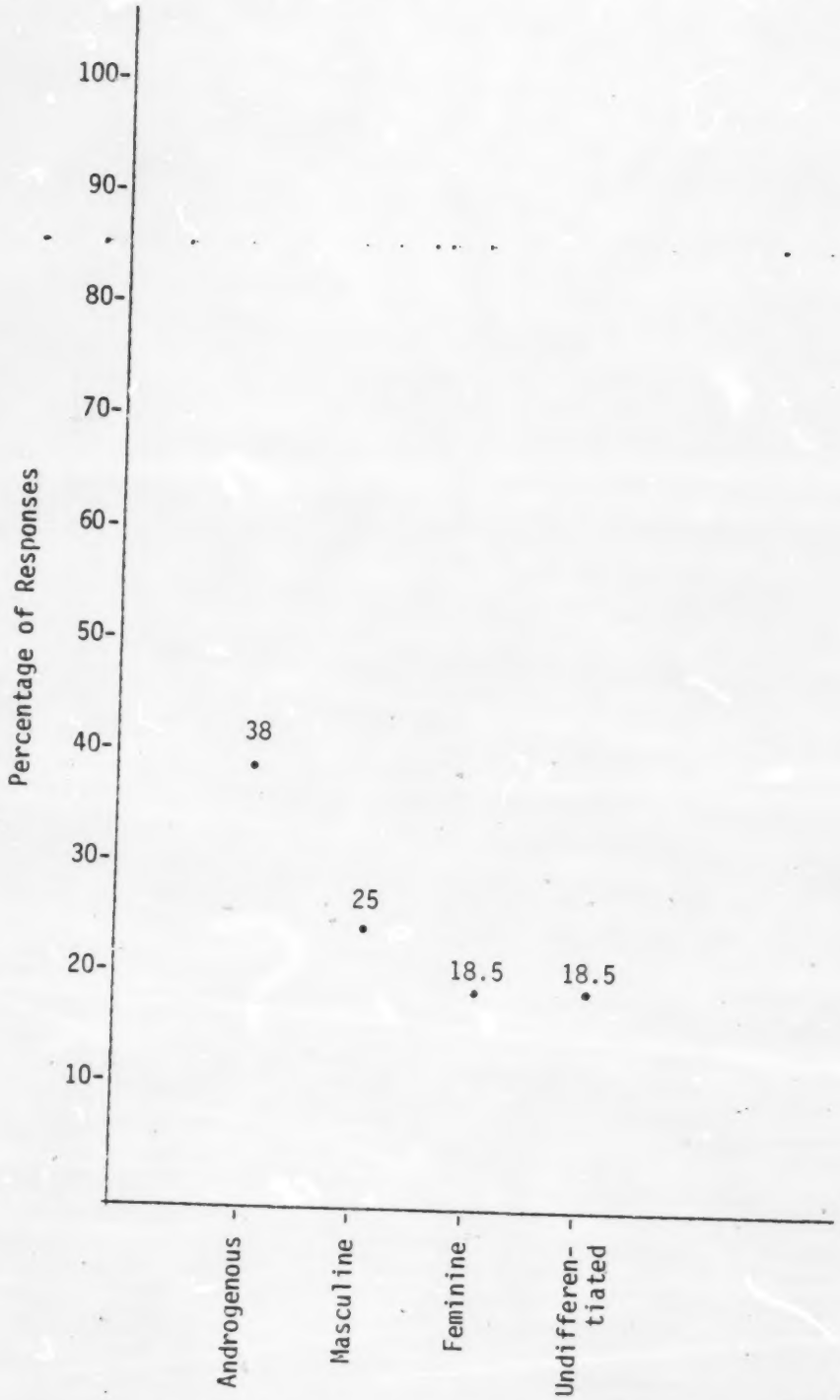
Responses of Teachers of Normal Chicano Students

Figure 3



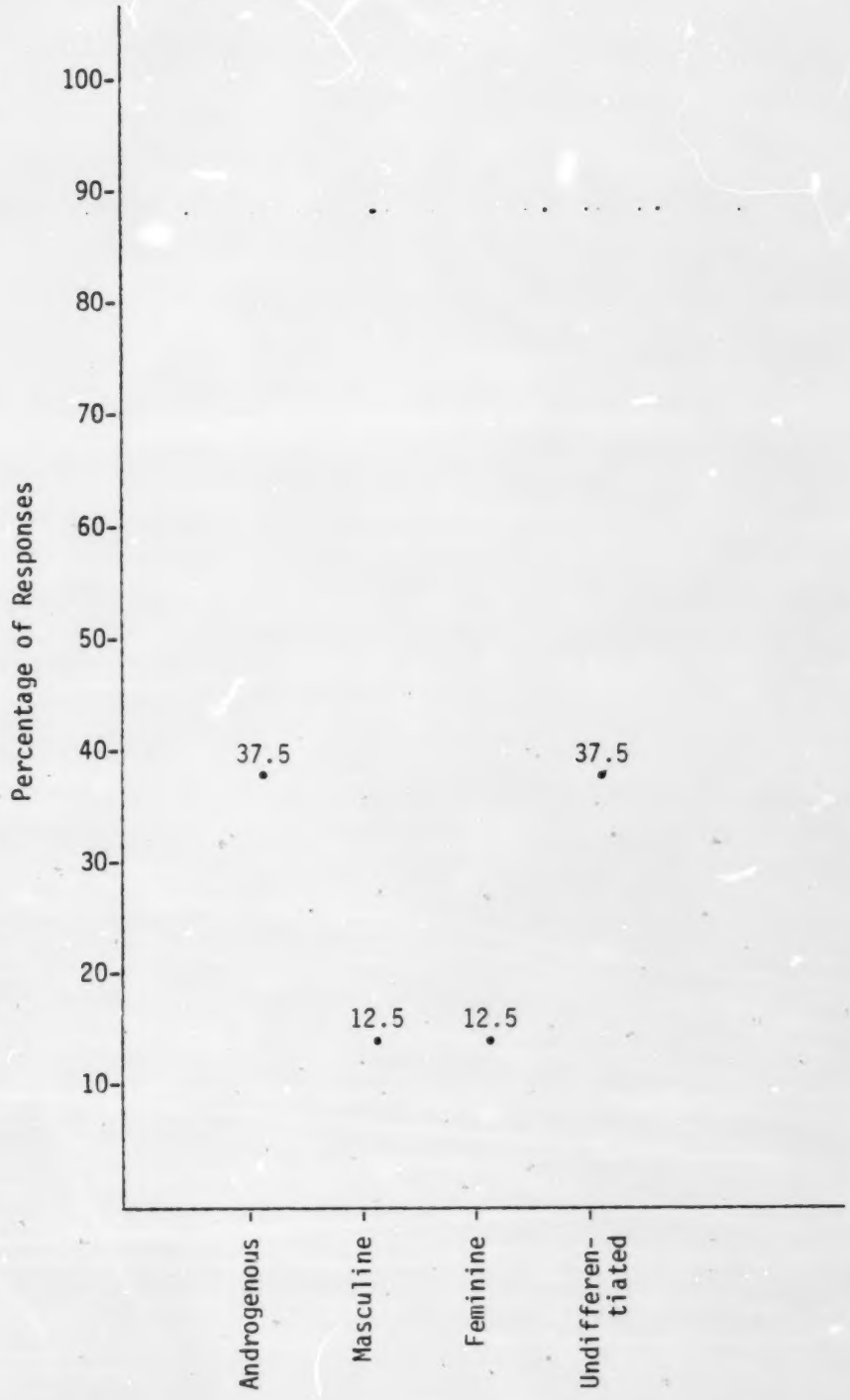
Response of Normal Chicano Students

Figure 4



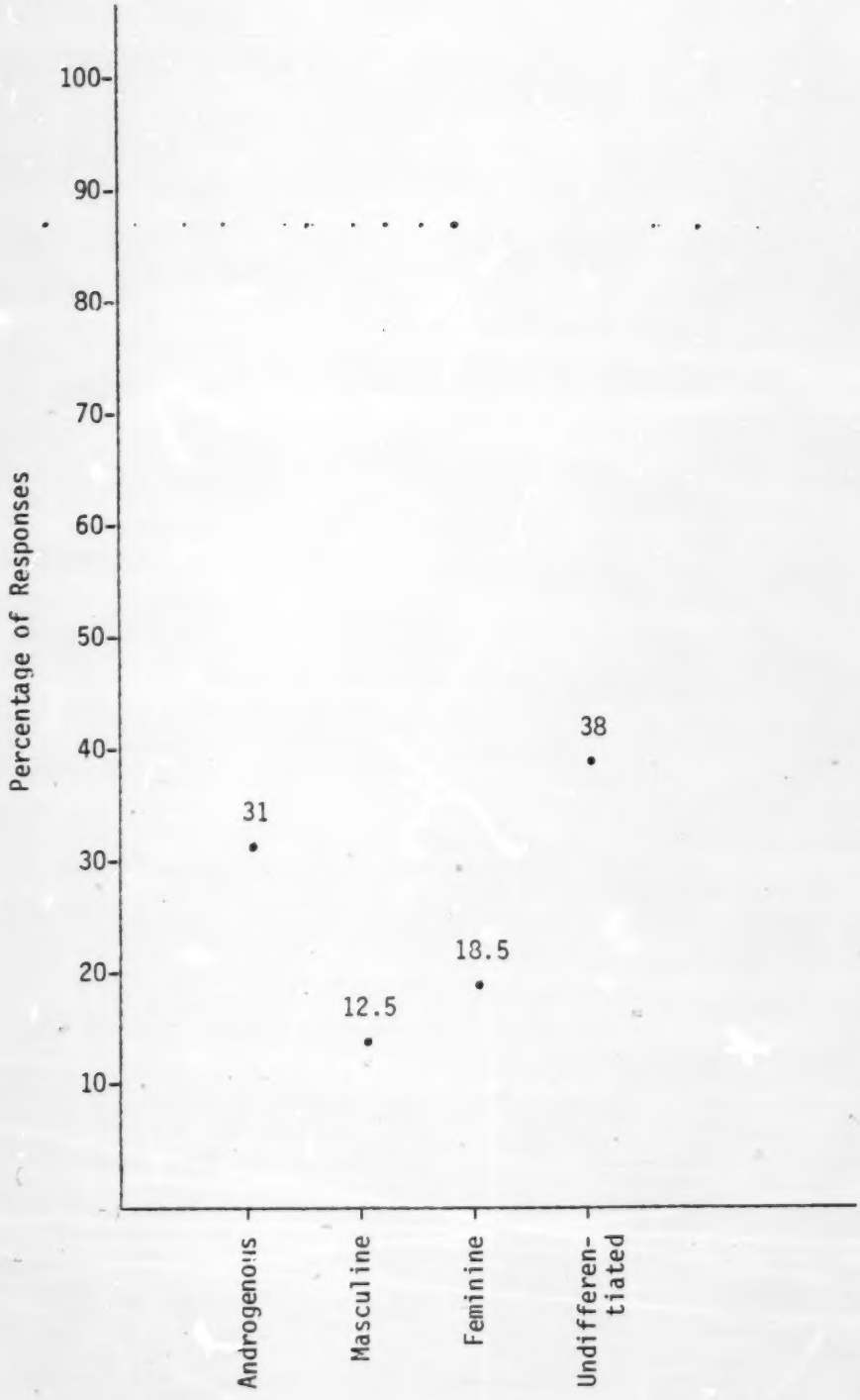
Responses of Teachers of EMH Anglos

Figure 5



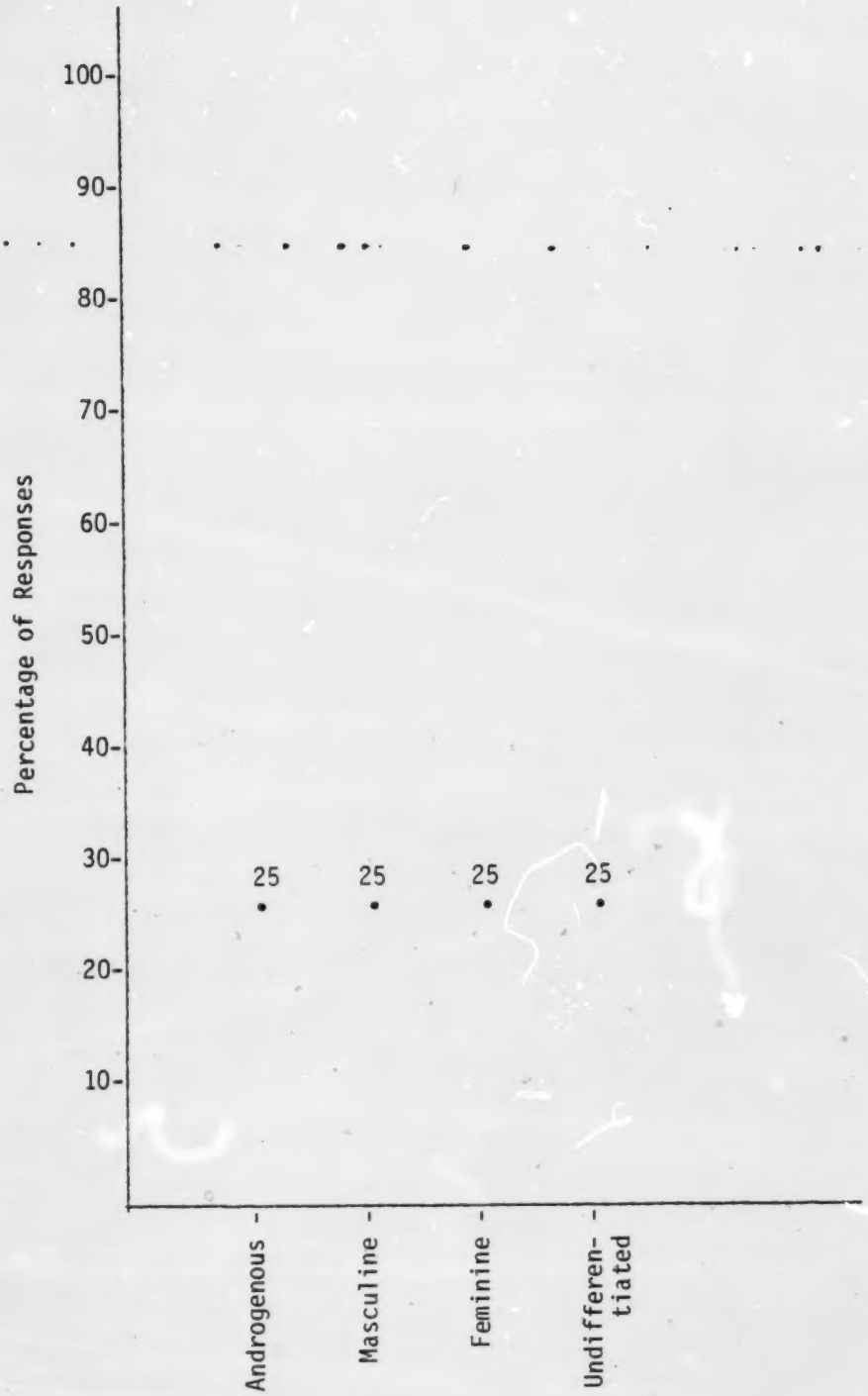
Responses of EMH Anglo Students

Figure 6



Responses of Teachers of EMH Chicanos

Figure 7



Responses of EMH Chicano Students

Figure 8

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